



Solar to be Used to Expand Access to Electricity in Ghana

NEW YORK, New York - The government of Ghana is committed to providing electricity to more than 4,000 remote villages by 2020, and it will use solar energy to help achieve that target.

Three-quarters of the country lacks access to power, but the goal is to extend electrical services to every community of more than 500 residents. The population is expected to double in 20 years, and low density and considerable distance between remote communities could make extensions to the national grid a challenging and expensive option. Ghana is expanding its thermal power generation due to limitations with existing hydropower facilities, but this will increase emission of greenhouses gases from the combustion of fuel oil.

"Free-standing photovoltaic (PV) systems could provide a better alternative to grid extension for supplying electricity to these villages as well as larger communities," says a report from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on the \$3 million project that started in 1996 and will finish next month. Eighty percent of the funding will come from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a joint venture of the UNDP, UN Environment Program and the World Bank.

Ghana lacks the technology that is needed to encourage broad use of PV and a 'critical mass' of market activities is required to attract private sector investment and activities, which will stimulate competition, reduce prices and improve services.

The installation of PV systems in 13 communities in northern Ghana will serve as a pilot project to combine private and public sectors efforts to use PV and PV/diesel hybrid power systems. These technologies will be used to provide off-grid electrification for communities that are deemed to be not technically or economically suitable for grid extension.

The funding will pay for community energy surveys that assess energy consumption patterns and the willingness of a community to pay for their electricity, the establishment of technical standards for equipment and installation practices, training and equipment testing, and the installation of household PV systems in all pilot communities.

GEF is the funding agency of the United Nations Development Program, the UN Environment Program and the World Bank.

<http://www.undp.org/gef/write-up/ghana.htm>

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